

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 00355 01 OF 02 081228Z

17

ACTION H-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9622

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 0355

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (THURMOND AND SCOTT)

SUBJ: CODEL THURMOND: MEETING WITH THAI FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN

SUMMARY: SENATORS THURMOND AND SCOTT MET WITH THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER JANUARY 8. THEY QUESTIONED HIM IN DETAIL ABOUT THE THREAT TO THAILAND FROM CHINA AND NORTH VIETNAM. THEY STRESSED THE THEME THAT SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO HELPING SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED BY REFERRING TO THAI EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA THROUGH ASEAN. HE STRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AMBITION WAS TO ACHIEVE HEGEMONY OVER ALL OF INDOCHINA. HE CONCLUDED BY RECALLING THE LONG HISTORY OF AMICABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND U.S. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 00355 01 OF 02 081228Z

1. AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, THAI FOREIGN MINISTER

CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA SUMMARIZED THAI FOREIGN POLICY SINCE THE OCTOBER 1973 CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. HE REITERATED THE BASIC THEME THAT THAILAND IS WILLING TO BE FRIENDLY TO ALL COUNTRIES THAT ARE FRIENDLY TO THAILAND. THIS POLICY APPLIES IRRESPECTIVE OF IDEOLOGY, AND EVEN TO COMMUNISTS. HE CITED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA, EAST GERMANY, POLAND, AND ROMANIA IN EASTERN EUROPE; AND WITH MONGOLIA IN ASIA.

2. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT THAILAND DID NOT YET HAVE RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA, NORTH VIETNAM, OR THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA, THE LAST BECAUSE THE RTG MAINTAINS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN. HE MENTIONED THE RTG HAD ALREADY STARTED PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT WITH THE PRC AND WAS PROCEEDING STEP BY STEP TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, FIRST THROUGH AN EXCHANGE OF SPORTS DELEGATIONS, THEN DOCTORS, AND MOST RECENTLY TRADE.

3. SENATOR SCOTT ASKED CHARUNPHAN WHAT THE RTG IS DOING ABOUT THE SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS IN THAILAND FROM CHINA AND NORTH VIETNAM. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED THAT THE THAI HAD BEEN APPROACHING CHINA CONFIDENTIALLY TO LOWER THE LEVEL OF THESE ACTIVITIES SINCE BEFORE PRESIDENT NIXON WENT TO PEKING AND WHILE THANAT KHOMAN WAS STILL FOREIGN MINISTER. HE CLAIMED THAT THE CHINESE HAVE RECENTLY REDUCED THE VIRULENCE OF THEIR ANTI-THAI BROADCASTS FROM PEKING AND SOUTHERN CHINA. (COMMENT: WHILE RADIO PEKING HAS SIGNIFICANTLY MODERATED ITS STANCE, THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE OF THAILAND EMENATING FROM RUNNAN PROVINCE CONTINUES ITS STRIDENCY.) SENATOR SCOTT ASKED WHETHER THE CHINESE HAD REDUCED THEIR PROPAGANDA EFFORTS WITHIN THAILAND, AND SENATOR THURMOND ASKED WHETHER THE CHINESE WERE NOT STILL INFILTRATING PEOPLE TO CONDUCT SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN ARRESTS OF INDIVIDUALS WHICH REVEALED BOTH DOCUMENTS AND WEAPONS FROM CHINA, BUT THAT HE CHARITABLY ASSUMED THEY THEY CAME IN BEFORE THE RTG BEGAN APPROACHING THE PRC. AFTER SENATOR SCOTT CONFIRMED WITH CHARUNPHAN THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS STILL OUTLAWED IN THAILAND. SENATOR THURMOND ASKED WHETHER THAILAND FELT ANY THREAT FROM THE PRC. CHARUNPHAN SAID, "NOT NOW.)

4. SENATOR THURMOND THEN ASKED WHETHER NORTH VIETNAM MIGHT CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 00355 01 OF 02 081228Z

NOT HAVE MORE INFLUENCE ON THE INSURGENCY AND POST A GREATER THREAT TO THAILAND. CHARUNPHAN AGREED, AND ADDED THAT THE RTG TRIED TO UNDERSTAND CHINESE ROADBUILDING IN LAOS OPTIMISTICALLY. THE RTG VIEW THE ROAD AS A COUNTER TO NORTH VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE IN LAOS.

5. SENATOR THURMOND MENTIONED THAT HIS PARTY HAD JUST COME FROM SOUTH VIETNAM AND ASKED WHETHER THAILAND WAS TRYING TO

HELP THAT COUNTRY. THE AMBASSADOR INTERJECTED THAT THE THAI HAD SENT TROOPS THERE DURING THE LATE 1960S. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT THE THAI HAD NOT GIVEN MUCH DIRECT ASSISTANCE SINCE THAI TROOP WITHDRAWALS THAT RESULTED FROM DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES. SENATOR THURMOND POINTED OUT THAT THE MILITARY PROBLEM IN SOUTH VIETNAM WAS NOT FROM THE VIET CONG BUT FROM REGULAR NORTH VIETNAMESE REGIMENTS. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY ACTIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM WERE ONE OF THE REASONS THE RTG USES TO EXPLAIN TO THE THAI PEOPLE WHY THAILAND CANNOT NOW SEN U.S. TROOPS OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

6. SENATOR SCOTT EMPHASIZED THE DEEP U.S. INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. WAS A STRONG, RICH, AND POWERFUL COUNTRY, BUT IT DID NOT HAVE INEXHAUSTIBLE RESOURCES. THE U.S. ADDITIONALLY HAD ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AT HOME. CONGRESS WOULD BE MORE DISPOSED TO CONTINUE HELPING OUT SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA AT A REASONABLY HIGH LEVEL IF OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE CAUSE. THE U.S. HAD SACRIFICED 50,000 LIVES, SUFFERED SOME 300,000 WOUNDED IN SOUTH VIETNAM, AND SPENT A LOT OF MONEY. THE SENATOR FELT THAT SOME NATIONS--NOT THAILAND--HAD NOT CONTRIBUTED TO THE CAUSE.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 00355 02 OF 02 081239Z

46

ACTION H-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 0355

LIMDIS

7. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED THAT BECAUSE OF LIMITED THAI RESOURCES AND THE FACT THAT THAILAND WAS STILL A DEVELOPING COUNTRY, THE RTG WAS WORKING HARD THROUGH ASEAN TO ACHIEVE PEACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE CITED THE 1971 KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AS A ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY. HE MENTIONED THAT ASEAN HAD EXTENDED INVITATIONS TO THE OTHER FIVE SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS TO JOIN IN, EXCHANGE VIEWS, AND LIVE IN PEACE. NORTH VIETNAM WAS AMONG THOSE FIVE, BUT WAS THE ONLY ONE WITH STRONG VIEWS AGAINST THE ORGANIZATION. CHARUNPHAN THEN REFERRED TO HIS RECENT LETTER (THE TEXT FOLLOWS IN SEPTTEL) TO NORTH VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DUY TRINH WHO HAD COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND WAS THE ONLY OBSTACLE TO FRIENDLY RTG-DRV RELATIONS. CHARUNPHAN SAID HE HAD REPLIED THAT THAT FACTOR WAS ONLY PART OF THE PROBLEM. HE HAD POLITELY EXPLAINED THE OTHER PARTS, AND PROPOSED CONTACTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 00355 02 OF 02 081239Z

BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

8. SENATOR THURMOND ASKED CHARUNPHAN'S FEELINGS ABOUT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE TOWARD SOUTH VIETNAM AND WHAT HE CONSTRUED AS THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OBJECTIVE THERE. CHARUNPHAN RECALLED HIS FOUR YEARS AS THAI AMBASSADOR TO LAOS IN MID-1960. HE SAID THAT "THE POWER THAT HAD CONTROL IN INDOCHINA HAD USED THE VIETNAMESE AS ITS FINGERS AND ARMS" BY EMPLOYING THEM AS CIVIL SERVANTS OUTSIDE VIETNAM. THIS ROLE APPARENTLY MADE THE VIETNAMESE FEEL SUPERIOR TO CAMBODIANS AND LAO. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AMBITION WAS TO ACHIEVE HEGEMONY OVER INDOCHINA. HE SAID THAT THAILAND COULD NOT ACCEPT THE VIETNAMESE AS "THE BIG FIST IN ALL INDOCHINA."

9. SENATOR SCOTT MADE THE POINT THAT IF BOTH CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM COLLAPSE THERE WAS NO DIRECT THREAT TO THE U.S., BUT A MAJOR THREAT FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED, "FIRST AND FOREMOST IS THAILAND." THE RTG THUS WANTED TO GET INTO CONTACT WITH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT IT WANTED PEACE. HE SAID THAT THIS APPROACH WAS "LIKE ROLLING SOMETHING HEAVY UP A MOUNTAIN."

10. IN ACKNOWLEDGING THAI INTEREST IN CAMBODIAN SECURITY, CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT GETTING THE KHMER LEADERS TOGETHER IS A DIFFICULT PROPOSITION. SENATOR THURMOND COMMENTED THAT LON NOL SAID THAT HE AGREES TO TALK WITH THE OTHER SIDE. CHARUNPHAN REJOINED THAT SIHANOUK REFUSES, AND ADDITIONALLY REGARDS LON NOL AS A

TRAITOR. THE AMBASSADOR PRAISED THE ROLE ON THE KHMER VOTE DURING THE RECENT SESSION OF THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ANAN PANYARACHUN, THAI AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N. AND THE U.S. CHARUNPHAN MENTIONED THAT THE OUTCOME HAD BEEN FRUITFUL BUT, "WE HAVE TO WORK HARD ON THE FOLLOW-UP" SINCE NEXT YEAR MIGHT BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT. HE SAID THAT THE THAI WERE TRYING TO GET RID OF THESE DIFFICULTIES THROUGH DETENTE, FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF THE BIG POWERS.

11. SENATOR SCOTT EMPHASIZED THAT HE STILL SAW INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM AS A THREAT TO THE FREE WORLD. HE ADVOCATED TELLING CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION TO STOP SUPPLYING NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA, AND CEASE SENDING PROPAGANDA AGENTS INTO THAILAND.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 00355 02 OF 02 081239Z

12. SENATOR SCOTT ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANYTHING CHARUNPHAN WOULD LIKE TO CONVEY TO SENATOR THURMOND AND HIM AS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT THE RTG WILL NEED U.S. COOPERATION IN THE MILITARY FIELD. HE MENTIONED THAT THE MILITARY HAD TO REQUEST AN INCREASE IN THEIR BUDGET IN 1974 BECAUSE THE RTG "WAS NOT ABLE TO SECURE HELP FROM FRIENDS ABROAD."

13. SENATOR SCOTT ASKED ABOUT THAILAND'S POPULATION CONTROL POLICIES. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED THAT A PROGRAM WAS ALREADY UNDERWAY. SENATOR SCOTT ASKED WHAT STEPS THE RTG WAS TAKING TO COMBAT THE NORTHEAST INSURGENCY. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED THAT THE RTG WAS WORKING HARD ON THE PROBLEM BUT IT DID NOT ASK FOR OUTSIDE HELP. THE THAI PREFERRED TO USE THEIR OWN MANPOWER, ALTHOUGH THEY DID NEED MATERIEL SUPPORT FOR THEIR OPERATIONS. SENATOR THURMOND POINTED OUT THAT UNLESS THE THAI COPE WITH THE INSURGENCY, IT WOULD BECOME A SERIOUS PROBLEM. CHARUNPHAN REPLIED THAT IT WAS CURRENTLY UNDER CONTROL.

14. CHARUNPHAN CONCLUDED BY STRESSING THAT THE RTG, AS WELL AS THE THAI PEOPLE, CONSIDERS THE U.S. AS AN OLD FRIEND. HE RECALLED AMICABLE RELATIONS THAT EXTEND BACK BEFORE WORLD WAR II, FROM THE TIME THAT THAILAND TRIED TO CHANGE UNEQUAL TREATIES IN THE 1920S.

15. COMMENT: THE MEETING REVEALED THAT THAILAND IS MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE TWO INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES ON ITS BORDERS, CAMBODIA AND LAOS, THAN IT IS ABOUT THE FATE OF SOUTH VIETNAM.
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